

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for inducing complete apoptosis of a liver cell expressing HBx protein, which comprises treating the cell with an NF- κ B inhibitor.

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2. The method of claim 1, wherein the liver cell is Chang X31 cell line.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the NF- κ B inhibitor is sulfasalazine.

10 4. The method of claim 3, wherein sulfasalazine is employed in an amount of at least 1.3mM to induce complete apoptosis within 120 hours after the treatment.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the amount of sulfasalazine employed ranges from 1.3 to 2.0mM.

15

6. A method of screening for substances that inhibit apoptosis of a liver cell expressing HBx protein, comprising the steps of:

a) treating the liver cell expressing HBx protein with a candidate substance before or after the treatment of an NF- κ B inhibitor; and

20 b) examining whether the apoptosis is protected.

7. A method of screening for genes that inhibit apoptosis of a liver cell expressing HBx protein, comprising the steps of:

a) introducing a candidate gene into the liver cell expressing HBx protein;

25 b) treating the liver cell with an NF- κ B inhibitor; and

c) examining whether the apoptosis is protected.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein a retroviral cDNA library or an expression vector is employed in the step of introducing the candidate gene into the cell.

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9. The method of claim 6 or 7, wherein the NF- κ B inhibitor is sulfasalazine.